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## Chalmette Battlefield Task Force Minutes

<i>Date of Meeting</i>	November 18, 2002 6:15 p.m.
<i>Location:</i>	Council Chambers Meeting Room St. Bernard Parish Government Complex 8245 W. Judge Perez Dr. Chalmette, Louisiana
<i>Present:</i>	Mrs. George W. Davis Mr. Alvin W. Guillot Mr. Drew Heaphy, CPA Mrs. Elizabeth McDougall Ms. Faith Moran Capt. Bonnie Pepper Cook Col. John F. Pugh, Jr. Ms. Geraldine Smith Mr. Rich Sussman, <i>Acting Federal Designated Officer for Regional Director, Southeast Regional Office</i>
<i>Absent:</i>	Mr. Eric Cager Mr. Anthony A. Fernandez, Jr. Mr. Paul V. Perez, CFP Mr. Michael L. Fraering
<i>Next Meeting:</i>	12/29/2002, 4:00p.m. -7:00p.m. Council Chambers Meeting Room St. Bernard Parish Government Complex 8245 W. Judge Perez Drive Chalmette, Louisiana

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Geraldine Smith, Superintendent of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, welcomed the members of the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force (CBTF) and introduced Rich Sussman, Chief, Planning and Compliance Division, attending as acting Federal Designated Officer for Patricia Hooks, acting Regional Director, Southeast Region.

Task Force members were asked to introduce themselves and tell of their interest and connection to the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery.

Drew Heaphy is the Director of Administration and Planning Services, St. Bernard Port, Harbor and Terminal District, and represents St. Bernard Port, Harbor and Terminal District. The port authority is the owner of the land on both sides of the Chalmette site and of the tour-boat dock where the majority of visitors to the battlefield disembark.

Captain Bonnie Pepper Cook works for the St. Bernard Sheriff 's Department and is representing the St. Bernard Parish Historical Society. She is a descendant of a veteran who fought at the Battle of New Orleans and a member of the Daughters of 1812.

Faith Moran is the Assistant Principal of Lacoste Elementary School and represents the St. Bernard Parish Council. She is a member of the Francois Delery Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Coral Lee Davis is the Honorary Vice President of the U.S. Daughters of 1812 and she represents the Louisiana Society of the U.S. Daughters of the American Revolution. Pierre Denis de la Ronde was an ancestor.

John Pugh is the U.S. Property & Fiscal Officer for the Louisiana National Guard and he represents the Louisiana National Guard and the Jackson Barracks Museum. The Louisiana National Guard has a great interest in the battlefield because it contains a military cemetery and a military battlefield. Jackson Barracks Museum also derives a large number of its visitors in connection to the Chalmette Battlefield.

Buddy Guillot is a constable in Ward A and a member of the St. Bernard Historical Society. He represents the Lake Borgne Basin Levee District. His main interest is in attracting tourists and the improvement of St. Bernard Parish.

Elizabeth (Gidgett) McDougall is the Tourism Director St. Bernard Parish. She represents the St. Bernard Parish government and the tourism industry. Her interest is related to the fact that the National Park Service (NPS) Battle of New Orleans site is the largest tourist destination in St. Bernard Parish.

National Park Service staff present included: Dave Herrera, Deputy Superintendent; Allison Pena, Cultural Anthropologist for the Division of Resource Management; Sue Davenport, Supervisory Park Ranger, Crescent City Unit, who handles the visitors services at Chalmette Battlefield, the Chalmette National Cemetery and the French Quarter Visitor Center; Dee Landry, Administrative Assistant for Resource Management; David Muth, Chief of Planning and Resource Stewardship for Cultural and Natural Resources.

Richard Sussman is the acting Federal Designated Officer (FDO), and the Chief of the Planning and Compliance Division, Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta. He has been assigned this duty during the transition period under Acting Regional Director, Patricia Hooks. He and his staff will be involved in much of the future planning and compliance activity for Chalmette Battlefield for the next few years.

David Muth introduced Richard Sussman as the temporary chairperson for the meeting and noted that a chairperson could be elected at the end of this meeting since seven members are present. He noted that the following four task force members were not present: Anthony A. Fernandez, Jr. representing St. Bernard Parish; Eric Cager representing the descendants of Fazendeville; Paul A. Perez representing the New Orleans Regional Chamber of Commerce; and Michael L. Fraering, Curator for Port Hudson State Historic Site, representing the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer.

Rich Sussman reviewed the purpose of the commission by reading a section from the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force Charter:

Section B. Purpose:

The purpose of the Task Force is to advise the National Park Service on recommendations for suggested improvements to the Chalmette Battlefield site within Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. The Task Force will review the condition of only federally-owned buildings and artifacts within the boundary of the Chalmette National Cemetery and Chalmette Battlefield units of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. Recommendations of the Task Force should address non-federal cost sharing.

Rich Sussman stated that a General Management Plan Amendment will be developed by the park and this is an official opportunity for the task force to provide input into the park's planning and development.

David Muth gave a brief review of the history of the Battlefield. He stated that Superintendent Smith has tasked us to bring Chalmette up to the standards that this most important battlefield deserves. He outlined the findings of the recent Chalmette Cultural Landscape Report, which makes recommendations on how to treat the battlefield, the cemetery, the Malus-Beauregard House, and the monument. The park wants to use this task force to involve the public and stakeholders in our planning efforts. The intention of the park is to have these efforts completed in time for the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (2015) of the Battle of New Orleans.

Rich Sussman noted that in the Federal Appropriations Bill of 2001 the park received \$500,000 and a portion of that funding is to be used for the planning effort for the Chalmette Battlefield. Federal task forces, commissions, and boards all operate under the Federal Advisory Committee Act Of 1972 (FACA). In order for the Secretary of the Department of Interior or the National Park Service to accept official input from a federal advisory board or commission, it must be a congressionally established or a federally authorized board. These authorized boards represent various interests from the community or from history or environmental groups. The meetings are open to the public and a Federal Register notice must be published to announce each meeting. Since this task force is a congressionally authorized body, the task force can be engaged in the planning process and the advice given can be officially considered and legally accepted by the park service.

Commissions are an attempt to get to a consensus. There are representatives on this task force from the local police department, Daughters of the American Revolution, Daughters of the War of 1812, the ports, the National Guard, the local government, and tourism. Each representative will have special interests but it is the hope of the National Park Service that some type of consensus can be achieved. There are about forty-five advisory commissions in the National Park Service. Sussman discussed several other National Park Service commissions he has worked with. These included the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, Gulf Islands National Seashore, and Canaveral National Seashore. Normally commissions are set up for 10 years but this task force is for two years. A background discussion of the advisory commission for the Jimmy Carter Historic Site Advisory Commission showed it to be very unique. It was made up of five nationally recognized scholars in the areas of the life and presidency of Jimmy

Carter, the 20<sup>th</sup> century rural south, historic preservation, and the American Presidency.

The basic rules and procedures for the Task Force were reviewed.

- This group has a charter and twelve committee members. The task force will meet several times a year either quarterly or every two months. There are specific rules and regulations for the reimbursement process for travel. Local members of the committee are not normally eligible for travel reimbursement.
- The Designated Federal Officer (FDO) as assigned is the Regional Director.  
The duties of the FDO are:  
To approve or call meetings, to approve agendas, to attend meetings or have a designate attend meetings;  
To chair meetings or adjourn meetings when in the public interest;  
To maintain required records on costs;  
To ensure efficient operations, maintain records for availability to the public; and  
To approve copies of committee reports to the committee management officer or chair.

The committee may establish subcommittees, which report back to the full committee. The role of these subcommittees is limited to gathering information or conducting research for the full committee. These meetings must be open to the public at a reasonable, accessible and convenient time and location and advance notice must be published in the Federal Register. The meeting location must be in a meeting size room sufficient to accommodate enough people. Any member of the public may submit a written statement. The chairperson can require such written statements be submitted. This meeting is being taped and a summary of the meeting will be available for public review. Records of all expenditures will be maintained for public review. The minutes will be posted to the park web site and distributed to the members of the committee.

Rich Sussman continued with a review of the National Park Service planning policies and procedures. There are 385 parks in the NPS system. The 1978 Omnibus Parks & Recreation Act requires that each park must prepare a General Management Plan. Prior to this, parks used to prepare a Master Plan that was often very development oriented. About four years ago, the National Park Service wanted to develop a vision for fifteen or twenty years in the future as to how each park should be managed. Under this procedure the efforts of the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force will need to ask the following questions. What is the resource to be protected or preserved? What should the visitor's experience be? What are the important resources that need to be preserved or rehabilitated? Should visitors go everywhere in the park? How should the visitors' understand Chalmette Battlefield? What is more important, the resource or the visitors experience?

Now under this administration there is a strong interest that the local community stays informed and involved in the NPS planning efforts. Planners with the park need to have strategies to involve the public in this planning process. The General Management Plan (GMP) process gives the park a vision of the future, a practical framework for decision making, and a basic framework for how the parks will be managed in the future

Each park within the National Park Service system is subject to certain laws and policies. Most parks are established as the result of an Act of Congress or under a President Proclamation under the 1906 Antiquities Act. The President has the power to establish National Monuments on

federal lands. President Clinton established several new monuments at the end of his administration. These were on federal lands and just changed the use of the land.

For parks established by an Act of Congress there is enabling legislation and within that legislation Congress indicates what is important about a park and why it was established. The 1916 Organic Act is the major law that governs parks. What the planning process does is to determine what resources are preserved, to what extent the resources are preserved, and to what extent we provide for the visitor experience when these are in conflict. The visitor experience may have to be modified due to the fragile nature of a particular resource.

Because there is a General Management Plan for this park from 1995, a General Management Plan Amendment and a Development Concept Plan are now necessary because new issues need to be addressed. We now have a special appropriation stating that a Development Concept Plan will be developed. This allows more site specific issues to be addressed. He identified the following issues suggested by the National Park Service planning team.

1. Pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns of entrances;
2. Location and size of existing and proposed roads, parking areas, walls and trails;
3. Location and size of existing and proposed structures and their attendant functions;
4. Addition and/or removal of grasses, shrub-masses, trees or other vegetation;
5. Size and location of existing or proposed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible pathways and bridges;
6. Location and existing free standing and exterior lighting;
7. Location of existing and proposed fences and walls; and
8. Location and existing earthen berms and canals.

These planning efforts will develop a series of alternatives for the future of the park and will be reviewed through National Park Service planning and compliance procedures. The planning documents go through several internal reviews and revisions and are open to public comment with inclusion in the Federal Register.

Other comments and questions included:

There was a discussion of various ideas to be considered and that some ideas could be controversial or unpopular. The amount of support provided by the park to the task force was also discussed.

It was announced that a quorum was in attendance and that a chairperson could be nominated and elected by action of the committee. Ms Elizabeth McDougall was nominated by Faith Moran and seconded by Buddy Gulliot. She was unanimously elected as chairperson. The nomination for deputy chairperson was moved to the next meeting. A list of the Task Force members will be distributed to the committee members.

Rich Sussman reviewed the duties of the chairperson's position. The duties included attending the meetings, setting the meeting dates, setting the agenda, and contacting the park for needed administrative support or information. Other items reviewed were that the meetings will be recorded and a summary of the meetings will be posted on the park's web site and mailed to committee members. The schedule for meetings is usually every 2 months or quarterly. The

committee can set the meeting date, time and location. Agenda items can be from a committee member or the park. Agenda items and meetings will depend on other time lines.

The next meeting date agreed on was Wednesday, January 29, 2003 at 4:00 p.m. at the St. Bernard Government Complex Council Chambers Meeting Room.

Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes approved by committee at 1/29/03 meeting.